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World Domination 2001-03
LDL Marauders:
Sealed Finals Over!

by Jens Kreutzer
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At long last, the World Domination Championship is nearing its completion. The final round is now well underway, and the first half of it, the Sealed-Deck Mini-Tournament, is actually finished. Though the world champion will be the player who amasses the most GMP both in the Sealed and Constructed portions of the Finals, we have a winner for the Sealed section: Frederic Chorein (France)! Congratulations to the new Sealed champion!

Here are all the match results:

1st Round
Daniel Schneider – Wilfried Ranque: C10 – R4; R6 – C10.
Byron Bailey – Richard Cripe: C0 – R10; R10 – C4.
Holger Janssen – Scott Berger: C0 – R10; R10 – C3.
Frederic Chorein – Mark Applin: C10 – R1; R3 – C10.

2nd Round
Frederic Chorein – Scott Berger: C10 – R0; R10 – C6.
Richard Cripe – Daniel Schneider: C10 – R0; R4 – C10.
Byron Bailey – Wilfried Ranque: C10 – R6; R10 – C2.
Holger Janssen – Mark Applin: C10 – R0; R3 – C10.

3rd Round
Frederic Chorein – Richard Cripe: C10 – R0; R3 – C10.
Byron Bailey – Holger Janssen: C10 – R4; R10 – C3.
Daniel Schneider – Scott Berger: C0 – R10; R10 – C2.
Mark Applin – Wilfried Ranque:
forfeited by Wilfried, bye for Mark (1 GMP).

Unfortunately, Wilfried Ranque decided to drop out of the tournament in the third round, leaving his opponent Mark Applin with a bye. Mark got the average GMP score of his other two rounds, which was (1 + 1) / 2 = 1. Altogether, we were left with the following ranking list:

Sealed Finals results:
1. Frederic Chorein (FRA): 7 GMP [Opp GMP: 12]
2. Byron Bailey (USA): 7 GMP [Opp GMP: 7]
3. Richard Cripe (USA): 5 GMP
4. Scott Berger (USA): 4 GMP [Opp GMP: 14]
5. Daniel Schneider (GER): 4 GMP [Opp GMP: 10]
6. Holger Janssen (GER): 3 GMP [Opp GMP: 14]
7. Mark Applin (UK): 3 GMP [Opp GMP: 11]
8. Wilfried Ranque (FRA): 1 GMP (dropped out)

Tiebreaker was opponents' GMP score.

A special thank-you goes out to the judges who selflessly dedicated their nerves and spare time to this tournament. Due to repeated re-scheduling and cancelled matches, their efforts took rather more time than one would expect when considering the eleven matches actually played. The judges are (in alphabetical order): Frank Crins, Rik Geysels, Lukas Kautzsch, Yannick Mescam, Ingo Schildmann, and Masayasu Takano. Many extra thanks to Yannick, who acted as tournament director during my absence.

The match logs will all go online on the World Domination homepage eventually. A couple of logs from the Sealed Finals, plus all logs from Round One, are already available. In addition to the logs, I'll also publish the decklists of the upcoming Constructed Finals matches.

This brings us to congratulations to Frederic, Wilfred, Holger, Scott, Richard, Mark, Byron, and Daniel! I'm looking forward to seeing your efforts in the Finals, and to finding the answer to the burning question: Who of these eight will become World Champion 2003?

Preparations for the Constructed Finals are done at last. Rik Geysels from the Netherlands will play as a substitute for Wilfried Ranque. Rik finished in 6th place of the meatspace Round One tournament that qualified Frederic and Wilfried for the Finals, but since ranks 3-5 were not interested in playing, we are happy to go with him. Pairings for the first round were determined randomly and are as follows:

1st Round
Frederic Chorein – Rik Geysels
Byron Bailey – Scott Berger
Richard Cripe – Mark Applin
Daniel Schneider – Holger Janssen

Everybody is invited to watch the matches on IRC and see how these top players slug it out among themselves. See you there!

Yours, Jens Kreutzer

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"Elementary, My Dear Wilson!"
Famous Netrunner Stacks
#16: The Short Stack

by Jens Kreutzer
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using material by Byron "Neal" Massey and Paul Grogan

"I hope this stack gives you the same success I have enjoyed."
—Byron "Neal" Massey, *Neal's Last Words*.

Apart from The Big Dig, there is one other famous Runner strategy that gorges itself on R&D for the win: The Short Stack by Byron "Neal" Massey, posted to the Netrunner-L on February 17, 1997. The name was chosen because in the rather short time of eight turns or less, the Runner draws his or her whole stack and then (hopefully) wins with a flourish. Unlike Big Dig, which intends to make one huge run, The Short Stack makes many runs that become ever more effective. At its heart lie Highlighter and Microtech AI Interface, a deadly combination for explosive access power: Accumulating Highlighter counters let the Runner access more and more cards from R&D, while cutting cards that have already been accessed to the bottom of R&D with Microtech AI Interface ensures that no card is accessed twice. Let's have a look at Neal's original decklist:

The Short Stack
(46 cards)

10	**Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood**
6	**Militech MRAM Chip**
9	**Loan from Chiba**
4	**Access through Alpha**
3	**Nasuko Cycle**
1	**Krash**
2	**Highlighter**
1	**Microtech AI Interface**
1	**False Echo**
1	**Enterprise, Inc., Shields**
2	**All-Nighter**
1	**Rush Hour**
1	**Remote Detonator**
1	**Private LDL Access**
1	**Valu-Pak Software Bundle**
1	**Bodyweight™ Data Crèche**
1	**WuTech Mem Chip**

Neal himself has written an article that plays with the metaphor of stuffing oneself with R&D cards, and that does an excellent job of describing how The Short Stack works. I take the liberty of quoting Neal's article with some minor editing:

Flipping the Pancakes

"The first strategy is to use Bodyweight Synthetic Blood to draw through the entire stack as quickly as possible. I don't discard anything except excess Bodyweight Synthetic Blood, Access through Alpha, Militech MRAM Chips, and Nasuko Cycles. Occasionally I discard a Loan or two if my hand is too crowded. The Access through Alpha should be installed with the first Loan from Chiba, if possible, but sometimes I have to risk it. The Nasuko Cycle can be left out unless the Corp is playing an R&D that forces me to run before turn 8 (sometimes turn 7). It has to be installed before any early run, since a tag during the Corp's turn is instant death with an installed Loan from Chiba.

"It seems to take four Militech MRAM Chips to get past the hump, which usually comes around turn 3 or 4. Sometimes I only need three Chips. I try to hold the Loans back as long as possible to avoid paying the Chiba goons until absolutely necessary, and all those extra Loans require MRAM to keep my head from exploding.

"Somewhere along the way I install the Bodyweight Data Crèche, WuTech Mem Chip, and Enterprise, Inc., Shields. This has to be done before running starts, but none of these cards gives away the strategy, so there is no special timing needed to put them into play.

Setting the Table

"At this point, about six turns should have gone by. I have been furiously racing through my stack, installing Loans and MRAM and collecting cards. The installed cards should be:

- some Loans from Chiba
- some Militech MRAM Chips
- Access through Alpha
- Bodyweight Data Crèche
- WuTech Mem Chip
- Enterprise, Inc., Shields
- and possibly a Nasuko Cycle

"I hopefully have all eleven of the cards needed for the finale (the 'kit') in my hand. I try to follow this sequence in the last two turns of the game (hopefully no later than turn 7):

Turn 7:

- Loan from Chiba
- Loan from Chiba
- Loan from Chiba
- Valu-Pak Software Bundle, installing:
  - Krash
  - False Echo
  - Microtech AI Interface
  - Highlighter
  - Highlighter

Going Back for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Helping

Turn 8:

"First action. If HQ has a lot less ice installed than R&D, I play Private LDL Access, otherwise, Rush Hour. Private LDL Access is especially nice if the Corp ices R&D heavily after seeing the programs on turn 7. If I use Rush Hour, I access four cards, if not, just one. Either way, I give the Corp two Highlighter counters.

"Immediately after this run, I use the False Echo program to force the Corp to rez all the ice on R&D that they can afford. This sets up action 2.

"Second action. If I won't have enough cash to keep Krashing the R&D ice for five more runs, I play the Remote Detonator. Otherwise, I just run R&D. I almost always have to play

the Remote Detonator, and I will use that assumption for the rest of my description. I ignore the tags from the Remote Detonator since this is the last turn of the game. The Corp will not get a chance to send the Chiba goons after me (famous last words, but it usually works).

"Third action. I play All-Nighter and make two runs on R&D. I access two cards on the first run and four on the second, cutting off the ones I have already seen with the Microtech AI Interface before accessing. At the end of the action, I have seen ten cards (counting the Rush Hour from the first action) in R&D and the Corp has six Highlighter counters.

"Fourth Action. I play another All-Nighter. At the end of this action, I have seen 24 cards in R&D, and the Corp has ten Highlighter counters.

"Bodyweight Data Crèche. I run R&D again with the Crèche. After this run, I have seen 34 cards from R&D. Since this is turn 8, and the Corp has to draw at least one card each turn, I have seen every card in R&D.

Doing the Dishes

"A quick-setup Siren can really be a bummer. Hopefully the Nasuko Cycle provides enough protection to run on the Siren as soon as it is rezzed. The same is true of City Surveillance.

"Super-Speed Tycho can sometimes outrace me to victory. I have experimented with Precision Bribery, but it seems that most CEOs these days put ice on a subsidiary data fort before I can even grease the frying pan.

"There isn't much strategy or suspense when I play this stack, and it is currently retired. It does provide a sort of benchmark for speed Corp CEOs. I imagine there are stacks with Taxman, Viral Pipeline, or Scaldan that can win faster, but this stack is very predictable. If I can make it to turn 8, I nearly always win."

This was Neal's original article, and it pretty much says everything there is to say about his creation, except perhaps that it doesn't really do the Corp much good to start forgoing actions in the middle of the Highlighter R&D carnage, as the Runner can just start to run again next turn. However, since 1997, the tournament scene has changed, and *Classic* has been released. So, let's look at The Short Stack from a current point of view.

First, of course, the Revised Constructed Format has banned Enterprise, Inc., Shields, so this card should be removed from the deck list. This makes The Short Stack very vulnerable against R&Ds that pack multiple Net damage ambushes like Setup!. On the other hand, the format gave The Short Stack a new chance to shine, since Tycho Extension is also banned. Neal had always been worried about this: "I have to be fair and say that [The Short Stack] was too slow in the days of Psycho Tycho".

Second, thinking about an alternative icebreaker choice might prove worthwhile. Neal had already considered taking Bartmoss Memorial Icebreaker (and some Umbrella Policies as insurance) over reliable but expensive Krash. This takes up more deck space and still could let the Runner down in the critical last turn. *Classic* has introduced Rent-I-Con, and this is a really viable option, since it doesn't depend on any support cards, but is much cheaper to use than Krash. The single drawback is that playing Remote Detonator (in combination with False Echo) is a must after the run with Rent-I-Con.

Ironically, *Classic* has also provided a defense against Rent-I-Con: Glacier. If the Corp suspects that a Detonator is about to be played, a Glacier on R&D can be moved *away* at the start of the run to escape being detonated, only to return when the Runner next tries to assault R&D. This will be very expensive for Krash, but impenetrable for a Runner whose Rent-I-Con has just trashed itself.

Paul Grogan has built a post-*Classic* Short Stack and written some comments about it:

The Short Stack Mark 2
(45 cards)

10	**Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood**
6	**Militech MRAM Chip**
12	**Score!**
3	**Loan from Chiba**
1	**Rent-I-Con**
1	**Microtech Backup Drive**
2	**Highlighter**
1	**Microtech AI Interface**
1	**False Echo**
2	**All-Nighter**
1	**Rush Hour**
1	**Remote Detonator**
1	**Private LDL Access**
1	**Valu-Pak Software Bundle**
1	**Bodyweight™ Data Crèche**
1	**WuTech Mem Chip**

Here is what Paul has to say about his creation: "I was tempted to play The Short Stack for the Y2K UK Championships as I'd been practising it and wanted to see how it would fare against any decks with new cards in it. I was a bit worried about Data Fort Remapping which people might play. A Theorem Proof deck might also cause me problems but nobody seems to be playing that at the moment.

"24 hours before the event, I thought to myself that I really should change it a little bit. I looked at Rent-I-Con over Krash and I was worried about using Loan from Chiba as I'd overheard a few people saying they will be playing anti-Loan Corp decks. So, I thought that if I play Rent-I-Con, I need less money, so I dropped all the Loans for Score!s. I also dropped the Enterprise, Inc., Shields since the card is currently banned. A short while later I had the finished deck. I added the Microtech Backup Drive as a safety measure, just in case.

"On the day of the championships I never needed the Backup Drive or the Private LDL Access. The deck didn't lose a game all day, not even against Barry, who got two Data Fort Remappings out against me."

All in all, this classic Runner stack has seen a renaissance, and still seems to be a viable option nowadays. It doesn't have many rares, and never more than one copy, which should make it comparatively easy to build. Besides, it doesn't take a genius to play it, as the *modus operandi* is almost the same each time. Advice

for newer players: Try this out a couple of times and see how you fare. When it becomes boring for you, move on to something else, like others have done before.

Hints for Corporations that play versus The Short Stack (in its newer incarnation): If you know (or suspect) beforehand that you will have to face a Short Stack Runner, you have quite a number of metagame choices, some of which have already been mentioned:

■ Play with Glacier, as almost every Corp does anyway these days. If you can ice R&D again after the big Detonation, Runners using Rent-I-Con will face a big problem. Other Runners will at least face big expenses and might not be able to pay up.

■ Play a Rent-to-Own deck. Some Colonel Failures in front of R&D and HQ might prove too much for Krash, but they probably won't be enough to really stop Rent-I-Con.

■ Play virus defense versus Highlighter. While Disinfectant, Inc. is a flash in the pan, two Superserums scored beforehand might make the difference, as the first four virus counters will be prevented. This reduces the number of accessed cards from 34 to 18. Three Superserums whittle this figure down to a puny 13.

Another way to threaten the Runner is having a way to increase the number of available actions per turn, like with Remote Facility, for example. If the Corp can forgo actions to remove the Highlighter counters right before the second All-Nighter, only 17 cards will be accessed. With the remaining one action, the Corp can then trash a Loan from Chiba for the win in the following turn.

■ End some of the Highlighter runs: Though Paul Grogan's experiences are different, Data Fort Remapping might still thwart the Runner's plans. A well-placed Rio de Janeiro City Grid could do likewise.

■ Kill the Runner with Net damage. Since Enterprise, Inc., Shields is ousted, this is a major weakness of The Short Stack. Skullcap isn't worth it, since it only prevents one source of damage, and Weefle Initiation doesn't combine with either All-Nighter or the Crèche. Therefore, the choice of weapons is up to the Corp: Setup! is standard, of course, and TRAP! works well as long as the bits are there to pay for it, but perhaps the strongest and most versatile choice is Fetal AI.

■ Use Theorem Proof as the agenda of choice. This delays the Runner enough for the Corp to trash some Loans from Chiba the next turn (thanks to Remote Detonator tags)—the Runner needs three extra actions (and two extra MU) to score three Theorem Proofs, which are not accounted for in the plan.

■ Dazzle Microtech AI Interface with Bel-Digmo Antibody. Perhaps only a minor annoyance, reshuffling R&D by rezzing an installed Bel-Digmo might reduce the percentage of accessed cards considerably. Perhaps most efficient at the point when the Runner just needs one other agenda for the win.

■ Divert the runs with Siren. A strong Siren fort and some defense on R&D and HQ is likely to spell doom for a Runner using Rent-I-Con.

■ Incidentally, a Newsgroup Taunting deck is very strong versus The Short Stack, since these nodes are immune against Remote Detonator. If the thing that makes running expensive cannot be removed after the first run, further runs will be very difficult to make.

■ Trying a tagging approach to go right after the Loans is also an option. The Runner might be forced to try and find another bit engine if tagging (and bagging) proves too much of a danger.

On the other hand, if the Corp has no chance to actively metagame against The Short Stack, possibilities for reactive countermeasures are limited. Trying to win before The Short Stack can kick into action is best, of course, but not easy. Drawing enough cards from R&D to get the agendas into HQ, a subfort or perhaps the Archives might be a worthwile tactic, best done if there is some way to increase hand size. Essential for this second tactic is an early identification of The Short Stack.

Of the two "big finish" R&D stacks, The Short Stack seems to be the more vulnerable one, while The Big Dig is probably a little bit slower. Nevertheless, both are solid and very focused strategies—if perhaps a little boring in the long run.

The Gatling Engine On Full-Auto

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In the many months since I last wrote about the Gatling Engine and CCG-Workshop.com, online **Netrunner** has really hit it off. Bugs have been ironed out, bit counters have been replaced by dice, and some complicated game mechanics have been integrated. Though it is still a "Beta" test version, the Gatling Engine **Netrunner** program is the best I've ever seen, and people are playing a lot. So, if you're looking for a game these days, head over to CCG Workshop, download the free software, and have a blast!

Though the main kudos go to Ed Mittelstedt (a. k. a. BugLaden) for creating the site, Eric Platel (a. k. a. toon_fr) has taken the lead of the **Netrunner** project. Thanks to him, the first online tournament has already taken place! I strongly suspect that the next World Domination championship will happen on CCG Workshop.

To give you the newest information on developments over at CCG Workshop, I thought that asking Eric directly would be the best idea. You can find out what he told me in the following interview.

Interview with Eric Platel

by Jens Kreutzer
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Eric, you have been a Netrunner player for a very long time, and have been especially active in its support recently. Before I get to that, could you please tell our readers something about you personally?

I was born in early 1967. I'm presently a computer science project leader for an insurance company. I had lived in

Paris for 34 years before moving to a nearly suburb two years ago, where I could afford to buy a house.

I like playing baseball (rare for an European but I just love this game). I read mostly fantasy books, and sometimes science-fiction (Norman Spinrad and Neal Stephenson). As far as my gaming life is concerned, I am first and foremost a roleplaying gamer. I started playing **Dungeons & Dragons** in 1981. I played many other games like **Call of Cthulhu**, **Rolemaster** etc. and discovered **Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.** in 1989. This is an important detail.

Going back to your Netrunner roots - do you remember how it happened that you started playing?

In 1996, I started to get bored playing **Magic: The Gathering**. There weren't that many CCGs around at that time. Being a **Cyberpunk** fan, I logically bought some **Netrunner** starters when the game first hit the shelves. My childhood friend Manuel (we know each other since more than 33 years ago now), who was in my **Cyberpunk** gaming group, did the same. We used to play in my Parisian flat with cards right from the boxes, 60 cards a deck. Having no Internet connection to join the **Netrunner** list, and not knowing any skilled players, I must admit that for the better part of two years we played a different **Netrunner**. We thought that playing Project Consultants cost 16 bits (12+4), that a subsidiary data fort could contain one agenda *plus* one node, that an upgrade like Turbeau Delacroix could be advanced, and so on ... . You have enough material now to start a TRQ Bloopers section.

I joined the **Netrunner** list in early 1999. It allowed me to talk a lot about **Netrunner** with Gilles Delcourt in my own language. Once connected to the Internet, the very first **Netrunner** site I discovered was the awesome "Netrunner Weekly" by Matthias Nagy. The very first deck I built was Holger Janssen's commons-only Runner stack.

Gilles eventually invited me over to his place in Belgium during mid-summer 1999. There was the Benelux Gencon in Anvers. I did terribly in the Sealed portion, but finished second out of 14 in Constructed in my very first tournament. That probably was beginers' luck, since I've never ever done better since then. I was playing a slightly modified version of Holger's stack and a Corp deck that used traps and fast-advancement.

In Anvers, I met other French players (Yannick Mescam and Frederic Garnier) for the first time in my little **Netrunner** life. They invited me to join them in the "Crazy Mouse" game shop, where they used to meet once a week. This is where and when I really started playing the game.

You are an active member of Netrunner France, and I'd like to take the opportunity and ask you to tell us something about the French Netrunner scene. What's its history, and how was Netrunner France created?

Heh heh, that has been chaotic. Before going to Anvers and talking with Gilles, I learned that the TRC France as it had once existed was currently banned by the TRC. As far as I understood, the main problem between the two institutions was a disagreement on formats. TRC France, whenever organizing tourneys, 'imposed' the 1/15 format as the regular format. Some people couldn't cope with WotC donating prizes for a format that didn't make sense commercially in the long run (as players didn't have to buy as many cards).

This led to a clash between Stephen Holodinsky and the former TRC France manager, and TRC France was banned. I myself had a certain sense of aversion towards another 'cultural exception' that seemed characteristic of the French people, and so I asked David Nolan (who managed the TRC Cells list) to unban TRC France. That was quite funny, because TRC France had disappeared and now only consisted of me alone.

I don't know much about what happened before 1999. After Anvers, it appeared that Yannick and Frederic were really interested in the Unlimited/Revised format. We then refounded the TRC France in September 1999, and our main objective was to organize tournaments in the Revised format.

Strangely, at the same time another famous French Runner, Emmanuel Estournet, was hanging around game centers in Paris to set up another players' organization. Jennifer Clarke Wilkes gave us the hint to contact him. So we all met at the Ostelen game center in early January 2000 and merged our two associations. Emmanuel was a hardcore 1/15 player, so we made compromises, like phasing out 1/15 very slowly.

That's how Netrunner France was created. I ended up as webmaster, Emmanuel as chairman and Yannick as everything else. We organized an Omni league straight away and got 44 players. With a lot of sarcasm, we were dubbed the "378th French **Netrunner** player association" in the *Lotus Noir* gaming magazine. But that just gave us the inspiration to work harder.

In all tournaments we organized, there were at least one Sealed event (we bought tons of boxes on eBay) and one Revised event. We slowly phased out 1/15. We used the famous DCI Reporter program a lot, as well as another ranking program I wrote in VB with an Access database. I'm not really accurate with my player stats, but we can boast to have enrolled more than 100 different players in our tournaments within three years. Revised is now our official format, along with Sealed.

Who are the top French players?

Frederic Garnier is certainly one of the best French Runners in Constructed. He not only plays very well but always comes up with new deck concepts that are very competitive. Yannick Mescam is the best in Sealed. He just makes a point of finishing first place in every Sealed tournament. I'm eager to see the next World Domination Championships since Yannick is qualified.

What's the French Netrunner scene like right now, and what are your plans for the future?

The situation these days really isn't very bright: Back in January 2000, four game shops were alive and kicking, most importantly Ostelen. As it was known as the biggest gaming center in Europe, we suffered a hard blow when it closed its gates forever almost a year ago. The other game shops don't exist anymore, either. We held our 2002 Nationals in a place I don't really like: small, dusty and dark. As a matter of fact, we haven't organized the Paris Open this year. We're still looking for a decent venue for our next Nationals.

But we're still working on our VIP cards. Yannick, who plays a tremendous number of CCGs, came up with the very first idea. In his mind, VIPs were special operations and preps that

you could fetch from your deck before the start of the game and put into play immediately. After some brainstorming sessions, they ended up as a specific card type, called VIP. Yannick designed all of the game mechanics, while I did the card design and used my knowledge about the **Cyberpunk** universe to give them names. I contacted R. Talsorian and received a favorable answer from Lisa Pondsmith on the question of using **Cyberpunk** art for our cards. We used the VIP cards during 2002 Nationals, and they received a very good response from the players, who are now actually coming up with new ideas.

The French scene is special in a way because French is the only language you can buy Netrunner cards in other than English. Are there still enough French cards left for buying?

It's pretty hard to find cards in any language, now that Ostelen has closed down. Netrunner France has a good stock of English cards, but we're lacking *Proteus* now. So if anybody could help us out … .

Is there anything remarkable about the French edition that the English edition doesn't have?

As far as I can tell, French cards are darker, so I find them a little bit more visually attractive.

Do you prefer French or English cards?

I don't have any French cards. I traded them for English ones in order to have a coherent set. I played **Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.** with English rules, so I wanted to use the already-familiar **Cyberpunk** vocabulary.

What do you think about the French translation?

The translation in general is o.k., but Pacifica Regional AI and Evil Twin are buggy.

Have you ever seen a French Investment Firm ("Cabinet d'investissement")?

No, never, and I'm pretty sure it doesn't exist.

Would you like to see one printed as a promotional card?

Printing it as a promotional card is a good idea. But to tell the truth, I've already designed it for the Gatling Engine.

Ah, yes, the Gatling Engine. There have been huge developments over at the CCG Workshop (ccg-workshop.com). You have taken the lead for the Netrunner project and are working hard to make it better still. Could you please tell us the whole story?

Well, every 'old' **Netrunner** list subscriber may remember the very first mail BugLaden (Ed Middlestedt) sent. I went to his site back then, but upon seeing that I needed to download that many things, I just gave up.

But you, Jens, informed us when a new version was available, and this time I downloaded everything. I gave it a try with Kult CCG, and I was impressed. I joined the forums, where some people were clamoring for **Netrunner** a lot. It seemed that nobody had a full set of cards, or time enough to scan them all. So I just said, 'Hello, would you mind if I took the job?'

I have to say that even though I own a full set of cards and a scanner, I received a lot of help from many players (Daniel Schneider and Dave Faguy mostly). I clipped 273 cards that Ali Hamra gave me on a CD (I needed to get rid of the borders), and maybe scanned no more than 50 cards myself. BugLaden did the first two versions of **Netrunner**. Two months after the public release, he gave me total control over further evolutions. So for the Beta.3 version, I corrected some bugs and added new features. Being a professional programmer, and thanks to GEngine smoothness, that was a fairly easy job. I worked together with other players a lot, taking into account their many suggestions. For the Beta.4, I'll add the official errata on pop-up texts, add other features that are missing, and think about how Record Reconstructor can be implemented at last.

One day or other, I'll also include new cards. I first thought about adding the second half of *Silent Impact*, but unfortunately, WotC forbid Zvi Moshowitz to give it to someone else. So I'll be looking forward to featuring fan expansions. I have to say that my motivation for working with the GEngine was boosted by the fact that during the previous three years, I just hadn't played that much. In the GEngine, I saw a very cool possibility for playing, say, two hours a day whenever I wanted, without interfering in any manner with my private life.

How was the recent online tournament organized, and how did it go?

Not exactly as I had expected. It took longer to be completed than I had planned, something like a week for each round (i.e. seven or eight games). But we have to remember that it was a worldwide tournament.

Who won?

Frederic Garnier won the tournament, scoring 22 GMP out of 24. This gives credit to what I said about him earlier.

Do you think that the next World Domination should happen on the Gatling Engine? Though the Finals Constructed round has now started, it is taking us several years to get this tournament done. The main problem in my eyes is the morale of the players. If you enforce harsh disqualification rules, you'll lose all players in the course of more than a dozen matches. If you are lenient enough to accomodate as many players as possible, things take (literally) years. Is there any chance to do things differently in your opinion?

Well, I do hope that the next World Domination will take place on the GEngine. As **Netrunner** project leader, that would definitely be a certain achievement for me, and probably for BugLaden, too. I remember that one of the very first questions I asked the GEngine users was, 'Is there any way for people to observe a game?' So I did consider GEngine as an alternative for World Domination.

Playing with the 'real' cards will boost players' eagerness to play. IRC is boring in the long run, even for observers. From my own experience, a week for playing a round seems to be enough, no matter how many players are involved.

In my opinion, you can only assume that players who take so long to get their matches done (or even drop out) haven't been 'warned' enough about the side effects: Getting up at 4 am because your opponent is on the other side of the planet is not cool. So what I'd suggest for next year is to group players according to time zones (two European and two American come to mind). In case of four time zone groups, you'd have four semi-finalists who'd struggle for a place in the Finals.

Anyway, being an online tournament organizer is a hard job. At some point you have to take rough decisions in order to not penalize those who are never late. I'm impressed by what you did during two years, Jens (and Lukas before you); you really involved yourself in the process when nobody wanted the job, so there's no point to criticize.

Well, thanks for the kind words. May I ask what your favorite tournament format is? Are you a better Sealed or Constructed player?

I don't really mind the format so much as long as I have fun designing decks and playing games. If I have to say I'm better in something or other, it's more about the side. I consider myself a good Corp player, but I'm a lousy Runner (even though I'm still improving). I also have more ideas for new Corp decks than for Runner stacks.

Any favorite Corp strategy/deck you like to play?

All kinds of decks, apart from Tag 'n' Bag. I just don't like it and find it cheesy.

Any favorite Runner stack?

My 'Clowns from Chiba' stack. It relies on installing five Clowns as soon as possible, along with the following breaker suite: Forward's Legacy, Wizard's Book and Japanese Water Torture. I pay with Loans from Chiba. I really like the stack, because every time I install Japanese Water Torture, the opponent is dazzled. At these times, I just explain that, Chiba being a famous Japanese city, I couldn't play any other wall breaker than this one. But I cannot really live up to the tournament environment. I'm dead as soon as I'm tagged. The next thing for me to learn is to design 'ultimate decks', I think.

What was the farthest place you went to in order to take part in a Netrunner tournament?

Hmmm... something like 500 km. The farthest **Netrunner** tourney I went to was in S'Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) in the Netherlands for the European Championship that Holger organized in 2000. I went abroad three times to play **Netrunner** if I remember correctly, and was kindly accomodated by Gilles Delcourt each time.

Any final message to our readers?

Well, I hope many of you will join us playing online. Even though it won't ever replace a meatspace tournament, the GEngine provides a nice alternative for people who just want to play. My nickname is "toon_fr".

Thank you very much for this interview!

Did You Know?

Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection

#16: Investment Firm

by Jens Kreutzer
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using material by Skip Pickle, with permission

Investment Firm is one of those bitgainer nodes that almost never see play. In the first place, it is perhaps a bit difficult to understand how it works, and second, once you have figured it out, its performance just isn't very impressive when compared to stars of the limelight like BBS Whispering Campaign. Let's look at the card text:

`Take 1* from Investment Firm, if it has any bits, at the start of each of your turns. Whenever 1* or more bits are added to your pool, you may put 2* from the bank on Investment Firm for each 1* you choose not to add to your pool. Effects that give you bits at the start of your turn cannot be used this way.`

This means that, for example, when you use an action to take a bit, you can put two bits on Investment Firm instead of adding it to your pool. This deal of two-for-one actually isn't that bad (rather similar to BBS Whispering Campaign, in fact), but you have to wait for two turns to reap the benefits. Unfortunately, the average game of **Netrunner** doesn't last long enough for long-time schemes such as this to be worthwhile, all the more since you have to install, rez and load a Firm before it has any effect (BBS rezzes for free and can be used as soon as it's installed). Besides, at its trash cost of 2, it is quite easy for the Runner to trash a fully-loaded Firm.

There is one trick with Investment Firm that comes close to redeeming it. It has been ruled that if you have multiple rezzed Investment Firms, and you choose to "invest" a bit that would otherwise be added to your bit pool, you may instead put two bits on *each* of the Investment Firms. With two Firms, this means four-for-one, with three, six-for-one, and so on. Anthony Petrarca perhaps wanted to express this explosive cumulativity when he included the upward-soaring ray of light in his artwork—the sky's the limit.

It is too bad that despite this amazing potential for profit, it still takes two turns for it to arrive in the Corp's bit pool. I have yet to see a tournament-worthy deck that uses Investment Firms as its bitgaining method. But I'm sure that it would be fun to try and make it work in a casual game.

Be that as it may, the really interesting stuff about Investment Firm has a lot to do with the French edition of **Netrunner**. The thing is that nobody has ever seen a French version of Investment Firm. Since there is nothing so very special about the card itself, at first people thought that it must be a coincidence that they never drew one. But when it

became clear that *nobody* ever drew one, the card gained a somewhat mythical aura: Some French players started looking for it as if they were on a quest for the holy grail—understandably, as they wanted a complete set of **Netrunner** cards for their collections.

Back in the day, *Wizards of the Coast* sometimes gave away complete **Netrunner** card sets to tournament winners. In the case of French players getting French sets, there still was no sign of a French Investment Firm: an English version of the card was slipped in with the French cards instead. So, if even *Wizards* didn't have any French Investment Firms, suspicion grew that this card had in fact never been printed. But it should have, since it appears on the official spoiler list as "Cabinet d'investissement". And, sure enough, there were always (second- and thirdhand) rumors that the elusive card had been seen somewhere.

We had to wait until Nov 21, 2002, to finally bring the matter to a close. Skip Pickle started a resourceful investigation and posted the following to the Netrunner-L (all material by Skip in this article is slightly edited by me):

Subject: The fabled card known as
"Cabinet d'investissement"

"This was a new one for me. Maybe it will be for you too.

"Lately, I've been noodling around over on the forums at www.ccg-workshop.com. A question popped up on CCG Workshop's **Netrunner** forum this week, about the omission of Investment Firm from the French version of **Netrunner**. […]

"I volunteered to go through my cards. I have a complete collection of v2.0 French; my brother participated in the v2.0 French localization and had received a full set because of this. Later, he very kindly gave it to me (mostly, I suppose, so that I would quit coveting it so loudly).

"This set should contain one of each card printed. The cards have never been separated from each other (they are cut, of course—I'm just saying that neither I nor my brother ever played with them or split up the cards in any way). I have now gone through these cards pretty carefully. There is no French equivalent of Investment Firm in the set. Some of you already knew this (or strongly suspected it).

"Now, I don't know how much you know about the card production process, but one of the things that should have been pretty obvious to the set producers is a hole in the card sheet. They should have noticed right off, for instance, if there weren't the same number of Corp cards as of Runner cards.

"That suggested to me that either there is also a missing Runner card in the print run (which the French Netrunner players should have noticed long before this), or that there is a duplicate Corp card (which they probably wouldn't have).

"So I did some counting, and discovered that the latter seems to be the case—I do indeed have two copies of a particular Corp card in my set. (It might also have been the case that a "new" card was introduced to the French set, but I think that would have been noticed before now.)

"Therefore, here's a trivia question for you collectors out there to chew over: Which card is it?"

To this challenge, somebody with the handle Simon Darkangel replied:

"I thought that if there was card duplication, that it would be either the card immediately before or immediately after the one that was missing. Since Investment Firm was uncommon, I found out which uncommon was immediately before (Information Laundering) and immediately after (Jack Attack)."

And Skip revealed the following:

"Nice call. It was Deconnexion Impossible (Jack Attack). […] Just to be clear: You assumed that the English cards were divided by rarity, then printed in alphabetical order, and that the French cards were kept in the same order as the English ones? Sounds about right."

And so, there is no French Investment Firm, since they all were printed as Jack Attacks instead. But how could this mistake happen? Skip asked his brother, who was—as Skip mentioned—involved in the production process, but he said that he didn't remember, and he was in fact mildly irate that Skip would expect him to remember that far back. The one thing he did comment on was the fact that they kept the proofing area dark, much to his irritation. It made proofing difficult, but someone with too much influence apparently liked the ambience of low lighting and wouldn't let them turn up the lights.

A proofing area that is kept dark on purpose? Seems like an act of sabotage to me. Maybe someone with too much influence didn't like **Netrunner** in general? ☺

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